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ABSTRACT

The concept of reflective practice and teaching people to be reflective practitioners is examined. The document begins with a look at professional knowledge according to three prominent professionals in the educational administration field: Schon, Schein, and Achilles. "Reflective" strategies that could be incorporated into courses and seminars, including critical analysis, are offered. Appended is an is an article by Paula F. Silver entitled "Reflectiveness in the Professions," a case record form, a list of processes of the reflective practitioner, an activity form, and a guide to writing critiques. (9 references) (SI)

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CHALLENGING NARCISSUS

OR

REFLECTING ON REFLECTING

Material Prepared for the Third Annual
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CHALLENGING NARCISSUS: REFLECTING ON REFLECTING*

Reflective practice has become a buzz-word. Although few doubt that professionals should engage in reflective practice, there assuredly is some disagreement about exactly what is professional practice, and also how to go about teaching people to be reflective practitioners. If we pool our ideas we should do better than Narcissus of old.

The concept of reflective practice was one underlying assumption, a keystone, of the original Advancing Principalship EXcellence (APEX) Center. Assuredly, the idea of reflective practice remains a mainstay, to say nothing of part of the name, of the Silver Center for Reflective Practice.

Careful reflection should help us develop strong directions, establish purpose for our acts, and help us avoid hopping from bandwagon to bandwagon. Leap before you look may be good advice for some things. Then again . . .

Professionals are people who apply (use) pertinent information/skills to solve problems--usually person-related problems--in appropriate ways, or ethically. Professionals often also must struggle with questions that require judgment (e.g., efficiency/effectiveness, or some other issue or dilemma). According to Schon (1989) the dominant model of professional knowledge is based upon assumptions/traditions as described in essays by Edgar Schein (1973, Professional Knowledge) and Nathan Glazer (1974, July. " The schools of the minor professions," Minerva, 12(3). Essentially, both authors "treat rigorous professional practice as an application of research-based knowledge to the solution of problems of instrumental choice" (Schon, 1989, p. 191). Schon continues by citing Schein's threefold division of professional knowledge

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(Schon, p. 191, citing Schein, 1973, p. 43):

1. An underlying discipline or basic science component upon which the practice rests or from which it is developed.

2. An applied science or "engineering" component from which many of the day-to-day diagnostic procedures and problem solutions are derived.

3. A skills and attitudinal component that concerns the actual performance of services to the client, using the underlying basic and applied knowledge.

The three elements proposed by Schein are roughly parallel to what Achilles (1985, 1986, 1988) has described as Art/Science/Craft, Theory/Research/Practice, or What?/How?/Why? The position as described by Achilles is depicted in Figures 1, 2, and 3 on the following pages, showing some suggested relationships among the key variables of What? How? Why? and Art/Science/Craft.

Professionals are responsible for all three elements--What, How, and Why. The ability to reflect on decisions that must occur in choosing the What, in determining How to apply the chosen "What" and in making the ethical/right/correct decisions (Why) and to elect appropriate courses of action characterizes professional practice.

But there is more. There is the "feeling for" the action. There is Polanyi's "Tacit Knowledge." If all there were to a profession was application of knowledge developed by the basic science or discipline, then all a person would need would be a good textbook. (Would you be the first patient of a textbook heart by-pass surgeon?) So, we know that there is something more to the "WHAT?" than the what; there is more to the "HOW?" than how. What is the origin of the extras? The "extra" seems to originate within the professional. Reflection. Thus, if we know the WHAT? (reflection), what are some of the HOWS? of getting professionals-to-be into the practice and habit of reflecting?

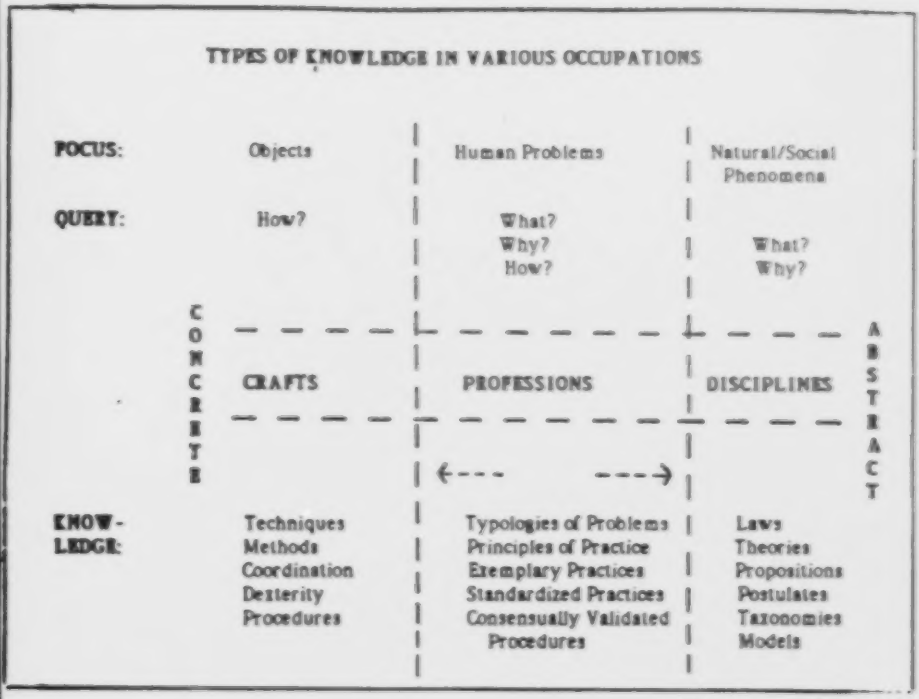

Figure 1 Types of knowledge in various occupations. (From Paula Silver, Draft paper, 1986, Prepared for the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration and used with permission.)

lw

	KEY QUESTIONS			
	HOW ?	WHAT ?	WHY ?	TRAINING BASE
Craftsman	Practice	Trail/Error	N/A	Apprenticeship
Technician	Training	Theory Base	N/A	Schooling Apprenticeship
Academician	N/A or Vicarious/ Observation	Research	Study Analysis	Schooling Study
Professional	Practice	Training	Study Reflection	All of Above

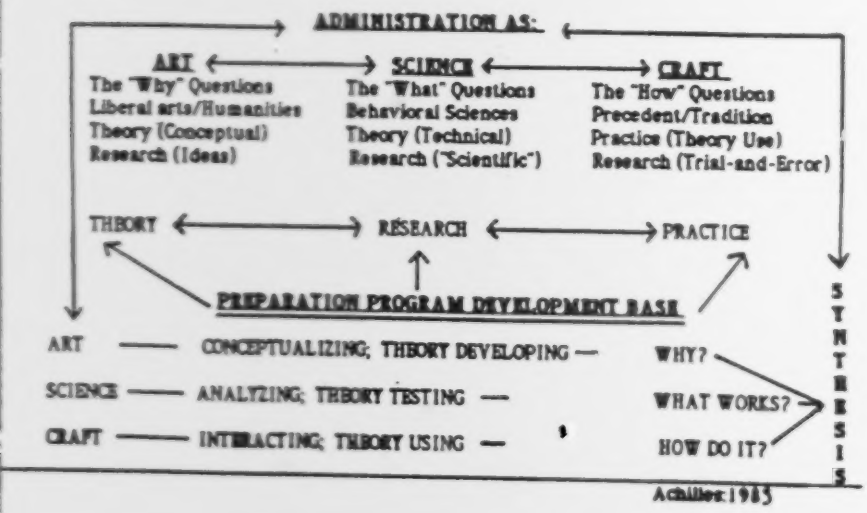

Figure 2 Some key issues in development of administrator preparation programs (From Achilles, 1985), with thanks to P. Silver for adding to these considerations.

INSERT FIGURE 3

WHAT?	Specialty/ Specialist	Skills Training	Science	Research
HOW?	Expert/ Practitioner	Clinical Practice	Craft	Practice
WHY?	Liberal Arts/ Generalist	Academics	Art	Theory
WHEN?				

Figure 3. Common Elements Supporting the Content/Instruction Nexus in Preparation Programs for the Professions (Different from Liberal Arts).

As professionals in teaching, we are not satisfied with telling our students that they should reflect; we must give them opportunities to learn how to reflect, to be reflective. How?

Since reflecting upon the notion of the need for professionals to reflect through discussions with Paula and through some reading, I have tried several steps and strategies--with varying degrees of success--to help students contemplate and analyze their own administrative styles, decisions, and efforts. To the degree that this is encouraging "reflective practice," I have been attending at least minimally to the idea. At various times, I have incorporated some "reflective" activities into courses and seminars: Introduction to Education Administration, Building-Level Administration, and Seminar in Problems of Building-Level Administration. I employ the following strategies.

1. Distribute some original material from the APEX Center, including Paula Silver's description of the "Case Report" and the form developed to guide the recording of the case report. (Attachment.) I use the original format because of its simplicity and brevity. It also includes space for people to enter ideas and concepts that they have after they have thought about a particular action for some time ("Further Reflections"). I also enjoy helping students reflect on the nature of the problem. Interestingly, students have considerable trouble in problem identification. What is a problem?

2. I ask students to read fairly short, but interesting novels, plays, or poetry which address some issues of administration. Examples of these include the plays "Galileo," "A Man for All Seasons," "Antigone"; novels such as The Lord of the Flies, Jonathan Livingston Seagull, The Pearl; and works pertaining directly to administration, such as that mainstay of humanism, The Prince. We also use other stimuli. I try to use materials that are in paperback, easy to obtain, and can be read fairly quickly without offering "cookbook" or "textbook" falderol. As students read and become acquainted with these works, I ask them to explain to the rest of the class something about some decisions which they, themselves, have recently made. Next, we ask them to consider their decisions in terms of some decisions or actions of characters in the "reflective" materials which the group has read. Is it more reasonable to "recant" as did Galileo in order to be around to work and advance your ideas, or is it better to take a firm, absolute stand, as did Sir Thomas More, and to die for high

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principles? What are the different impacts of the different acts?

3. I invite students to bring with them to class one example of a difficult decision from the preceding week. Then, those who wish to share the experiences follow a format. They describe the context, the problem, and the decision or action taken. The decision or action becomes the focus of discussion. Each person receives a critique from classmates regarding the decision. Then we engage in some give and take so that people can expand on why they made certain decisions, and what they might do if they have another chance at making the same decision.

4. After a discussion of three or four oral presentations, or a discussion of several case reports or critical analyses of some decisions, the class attempts to reflect on similarities and differences inherent in the examples and then tries to cast similar decisions into some theoretical perspective(s) which we have discussed. In other words, students attempt to describe or define a class or group of decisions in terms of, for example motivation theory, or some facet of organizational behavior, or some other perspective or framework which seems useful in untangling the singular (particularistic) decision and weaving it into a class of decision types. By contemplation and reflecting, we try to locate the several separate situations within some theory--a move from practice to theory.

A second procedure, employed with some success, is to follow the strategies described on the activity form in Appendix B. The success of this activity depends considerably upon the student's ability to select important dilemmas, issues or problems. This brings us to the inability of many people to identify problems clearly. (See Getzels, 1979; McWhirt, et al., 1989-90; Jackson & Achilles, in preparation.)

One step to engage students in reflective thinking is to employ the written strategy of the critique, or a critical analysis of some assignment or reading. The critique requires the student to evaluate ideas and synthesize the ideas in the original material--what is being critiqued in such a way as to establish relationships with other ideas, or to analyze the material in terms of logic, consistency, importance, etc. The process of thinking about the material, relating it to other ideas--really trying to "locate" the

material within a stream of thought or research--and putting some value upon it should cause the student to engage in reflective contemplation. The nature of a critique encourages reflection. The usual length of a critique (4-7 double-spaced pages in most of my assignments) keeps the activity from rambling. Generally, in the implications section of the critique, the student attempts to relate concepts from the material being critiqued to important trends and theories. This step offers one way to move from practice to theory. Reflect on that! Appendix C includes the suggested format for a critique.

Of the approaches which I have tried, I personally find the most comfort in discussing present-day decisions in relation to generalized concepts identified in pieces of literature or "The Classics." I am probably more comfortable with this particular approach because of my own training and interest in the humanities as a way to improve administration, than because this idea or approach is inherently better, or has more merit, than the others.

The interesting thing about thinking about reflective practice is that, until I thought some about it, I did not know that with the strategies and activities which had become part of my class instruction I was trying to encourage students to engage in reflections about practice. At least Narcissus knew what he was looking at!

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CASE REPORT

VOLUME 1, NO. 1 OCTOBER, 1984

REFLECTIVENESS IN THE PROFESSIONS

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Principals are very busy individuals! You know this from your own experience, and research supports the contention. There is hardly time to interpose yet another task, that of maintaining case records, in the rushed life of the school administrator without sacrificing some other activities or forfeiting precious free time.

If we look at the other professions, however, fields such as law, medicine, and architecture — we find that practitioners do keep case records as a normal part of their hectic days. The architect's floor plans, the physician's case histories, the attorney's case briefs — all these types of case records serve vital functions for the individual professionals and for the advancement of their respective fields. In this CaseReport we will explore the possible advantages of case records for the various professions and for the principalship. We will focus particularly on *reflective practice* and *knowledge production.*

Reflective Practice

One major set of advantages is associated with the individual practitioner's own continuous growth and development as a professional. This set of advantages represents the concept of *reflective practice*, a style of practice that is thoughtful, introspective, and intellectually curious. Reflective practice suggests a quest for understanding and a search for knowledge beyond what is already known about the object of practice (in this case, schools). There are at least six ways, as enumerated below, in which case record keeping contributes to reflective practice.

1. Case records help to imprint the case details in memory. Because of the disruptions and frequent interruptions of a typical day, many of the specific details of particular situations tend to slip away. What we remember usually is a selected set of details, those that support our expectations or preconceptions. Writing the details, even in brief outline form, helps us to remember exactly what happened so that we learn more systematically from experience.

2. Case records help to expand the search for solutions to problems. Typically, we respond to problems or issues that arise intuitively on the basis of many past experiences. Except for special projects that require detailed planning and writing, we tend to react to incidents without as much thought or as much search for the *best* response as the situation might merit. The writing of case records helps us to step back from the action and thus to consider a range of options that do not come to mind immediately.

3. Case records enable psychological distancing. Sometimes when people make demands, complain, challenge or pose problems, we feel a bit threatened by their intense feelings and tend to react ego-defensively or emotionally. The writing of case records provides a "cooling off" period and serves as a reminder that this is a professional issue, not a personal one. Thus we can examine the situation more dispassionately and intellectually.

4. Case records induce the testing of assumptions. Since the case record starts when the problem comes to our attention, the plan for a solution is like a hypothesis about what will happen as a result of our actions. We discover afterwards whether the prediction was accurate. In the normal course of practice we often do not notice when our hypotheses are *not* supported because by then we are engrossed in other on-going events. With the case record at hand, however, we cannot help but notice when there are discrepancies between prior assumptions and later events. These observed discrepancies, then, are important stimuli for further thought and consequent learning.

5. **Case records promote systematic problem solving.** Many of the situations we encounter in the course of day-to-day practice are somewhat amorphous and ill-defined. By calling for certain types of information (e.g., possible causes, target date, etc.) the case record helps us to impose a structure or logic or order on the events that occur. Further, the case records remain on file for reference when somewhat similar situations arise later. The professional who has a large stock of case records on hand has a rich resource for self-development and creative thought.

6. **Case records help in meeting long-range goals.** When situations arise that require fairly prompt attention, we tend to focus our attention on the immediate circumstances, forgetting some of the broad purposes or goals we intend to attain. By pausing to reflect upon a range of options for action — as the professional does when writing case records — we can identify those responses that are most congruent with our broader aims. In other words, case records can help school principals *integrate* particular incidents with important educational activities.

In sum, case records serve as a vehicle for continuous intellectual growth on the part of professionals in a variety of fields. School principals who develop brief case records for a wide variety of problems or issues find their awareness heightened and their sensitivity to nuances increased.

Expanded Knowledge

Another class of benefits or advantages of case records is associated with the advancement of professional knowledge throughout a field. This set of advantages represents the idea of *knowledge production* as it is accomplished in the prestigious applied professions. Professional knowledge production suggests the systematic and scientific accumulation of information that is oriented toward the continuous improvement of practice in the professions. Six aspects of professional knowledge production are considered below with reference to the importance of case records.

1. **Case records enable the classification or codification of professional problems.** Fields such as medicine and law were able to develop their problem-categorization systems partly because of the availability of a written record of every case encountered by practitioners in the course of their work. The classifications, in turn, made it possible to organize the existing (and increasing) information so it is retrievable by practitioners as needed. The codification of practical knowledge—for the principalship through case records will ultimately make it feasible for all principals to draw upon the field's experiential knowledge easily for the resolution of the most frequent problem situations.

2. **Case records reveal both unsuccessful and successful practices.** School administrators often get good ideas about practice from the professional publications, conferences, and colleagues. These media of communication tend to disseminate "success stories," however, and rarely share efforts that failed. By providing carefully prepared case records, professionals make it possible for the field as a whole to discover seemingly reasonable solutions that do *not* succeed as well as those that do. Thus it becomes possible to discover those conditions in which reasonable strategies do and do not succeed so that practitioners can take the appropriate contingencies into consideration.

3. **Case records foster the dissemination of creative ideas.** One of the factors that helps the professions advance rapidly is the immediate and fieldwide diffusion of the most creative thoughts and techniques of practitioners. Although many of the most effective techniques and strategies of principals are made visible in the professional journals, many ideas do not ever reach publication for a variety of reasons. The sharing of case records would ensure that inventiveness in the solutions of perplexing dilemmas would be highlighted and disseminated broadly.

4. **Case records facilitate joint problem solving.** The availability of a written record makes it feasible for professional colleagues, even those at some distance, to bring their insights to bear on interpreting the situation and finding solutions. Frequently, a group of professionals can generate a far broader array of possible solutions than any individual can conceptualize.

5. **Case records foster a sense of professional community.** Much of the literature on the various professions highlights the particular *culture* and sense of community within each field. The practitioners feel a strong sense of identity with the values, norms, language and ethical code of their field. One important component of this sense of community, it seems, is that each member, by virtue of maintaining case records, contributes in a very real and significant way to the advancement of knowledge and practice in his or her field.

6. **Case records help to merge theory and practice.** The apparent chasm between theory and practice has long been a source of disgruntlement for practitioners and theorists alike. Case records represent the one vehicle for bringing the two together in a mutually beneficial way. By contemplating the likely causes and promising solutions to problems, professionals make their theories-in-use explicit. By analyzing practices, sorting those that "work" from those that don't and exploring both the conditions and the underlying reasoning both for successes and for failures, theorists are in a position to generate theories that are patently useful for everyday practice.

CASE RECORD

Case Title: _____ Date: _____

Evidence of Problem: _____

Nature of Problem: _____

Possible Causes, School-Based:	Evidence

Possible Causes, Self-Based: _____

Possible Solution: _____

Target Date: _____

A-3

(Continue on reverse)

Key Events:

Date	Event

Result (Date: _____):

Further Reflections:

PROCESSES OF THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER*

1. Question what, why, and how one does things; ask what, why and how others do things.
2. Emphasize inquiry as a tool of learning.
3. Suspend judgment, wait for sufficient data, or self-validate.
4. Seek alternatives.
5. Keep an open mind.
6. Compare and contrast.
7. Seek the framework, theoretical basis, underlying rationale (of behaviors, methods, techniques, programs).
8. View from various perspectives.
9. Identify and test assumptions (theirs and others), seek conflicting evidence.
10. Put into different/varied contexts.
11. Ask "what if...?"
12. Ask for others' ideas and viewpoints.
13. Adapt and adjust to instability and change.
14. Function within uncertainty, complexity, and variety.
15. Hypothesize.
16. Consider consequences.
17. Validate what is given or believed.
18. Synthesize and test.
19. Seek, identify, and resolve problems ("problem setting", "problem solving").
20. Initiate after thinking through (alternatives, consequences) or putting into context.
21. Analyze--what makes it work; in what context would it not?
22. Evaluate--what worked, what didn't, and why?
23. Use prescriptive models (behavioral models, protocols) only when adapted to the situation.
24. Make decisions in practice of the profession (knowledge created in use).

*Source: Roth, R.A. Preparing the reflective practitioner: Transforming the apprentice through the dialectic. Journal of Teacher Education, v. 40, n. 2, p. 32.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

WHAT IS IT?

Reflective practice is "aimed at helping (professionals or) students acquire the kinds of artistry essential to competence in the indeterminate zones of practice;" it is "education in artistry." (Schon, 1987)

The reflective (practitioner) engages in thoughtful reconsideration of all that happens (in practice) with an eye toward improvement." (Ross in Journal of Teacher Education, 1989)

"Essential to the reflective practitioner is the process of inquiry." (Roth in Journal of Teacher Education, 1989.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS FOR READING ABOUT IT

"Critical reflection in teacher education: Practices and problems." (1989). Journal of Teacher Education, v 40, n 2. (Contains five articles on reflective practice)

Schon, D. A. (1983). The reflective practitioner. New York: Basic Books.

Schon, D. A. (1987). Educating the reflective practitioner. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

ACTIVITY

In small groups of 2 or 3, each person take 10-15 minutes to discuss the following:

1. Select a dilemma from current or recent practice.
2. Identify similarities to other dilemmas and unique qualities.
3. Frame and reframe the dilemma.
4. Experiment with the dilemma to discuss consequences and the implications of various solutions.
5. Examine and evaluate the intended and unintended consequences.
6. Reflect on ways to possibly improve your response to the dilemma.

Critiques

A Critique is a critical analysis of a work in comparison with accepted standards. Experience in developing critiques is required in courses for one or more of the following reasons:

1. Critical reading helps students achieve a more comprehensive understanding of concepts included in the course.

2. Critical analysis of readings aids one in becoming a more discerning consumer of literature.

3. Evaluations of what is read assists students in comprehension of implications of the reading content for particular course interests and concerns.

4. The written critique helps the student develop the art of effective communication.

Guides To Writing Critiques

A written critique includes a minimum of four basic essentials: (1) Identification of material read; (2) An abstract of major ideas, points of view, and contention of the author; (3) Critical evaluation of central ideas, contentions, and points of view; and (4) An analysis of implications of the content for the particular course, study, or field of interest.

The first things to look for in an identified reading are major ideas and assumptions of the author. Try to determine the author's justification for his contentions. Review the supporting data presented. Examine the logic supporting the author's conclusions. Seek similarities and differences between what is being propounded by the writer and ideas held by other writers in the field.

In summary -- What is the gist of the article, pamphlet, or book? Can it be stated in a few paragraphs? What does it mean? What are the implications? Use headings for each section.

An Outline

I. Author - Title - Source
Use Campbell's Form and Style in Thesis Writing for correct bibliographical form, or APA, or other standard form.

II. Abstract of major ideas

III. Critical evaluation of major ideas
-Degree of relationship of conclusions to data
-Substantiation of ideas by good logic
-Adequacy of supporting arguments and reasoning

IV. Implications
-Meanings of ideas in relation to central course concepts

C-1